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# Federal Agency and Federal Library Reports

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## National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

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The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) was established by PL 91-345 in 1970 as a permanent, independent agency in the executive branch. Its mandate is to advise the president and Congress on national library and information policies and plans. The commission has four major roles: (1) *resident expert* for the executive and legislative branches; (2) "*honest broker*," bringing together agencies in all branches and levels of government to focus on problems of common interest; (3) a *forum* for the entire library/information community, including both public and private sectors; and (4) a *catalyst* to assist in getting programs implemented. The commission's continuing overall goal is to help provide the people of the United States with equal opportunity of access to the library and information services they need.

For NCLIS, 1983 was an extremely productive year as well as a time of change. In late 1982, the commission's third chairperson and four other new members were confirmed by the Senate. They are Elinor Hashim, supervisor, Reference and Technical Services at Perkin-Elmer Corporation, Norwalk, Connecticut (chairperson); John E. Juergensmeyer, attorney, Juergensmeyer and Associates, Elgin, Illinois; Jerald C. Newman, president, chief administrative officer and trustee, The Bowery Savings Bank, New York, New York; Byron Leeds, vice president, Publishers Phototype, Inc., Carlstadt, New Jersey; and Julia Li Wu, head librarian, Virgil Junior High School, Los Angeles, California. Dr. Sarah G. Bishop was named deputy director of NCLIS in June.

Three meetings of the commission were held during 1983: in April, during National Library Week in Washington, D.C.; in June, in conjunction with the Special Libraries Association conference in New Orleans; and in October, in conjunction with the American Society for Information Science annual meeting in Arlington, Virginia. In February the commission moved from its original headquarters on K Street to a federal office

building in southwest Washington, D.C. Office automation needs were studied thoroughly during the year, and a comprehensive office automation system was selected and installed.

## 1983 Program Highlights

In addition to its ongoing responsibilities in assisting the executive and legislative branches and the library/information community, the commission worked on three major program areas in FY 1983: (1) technology and productivity, (2) improving the dissemination of federal information, and (3) improving library and information services to meet changing needs.

The commission discussed the reports of three major NCLIS task forces during its 1983 meetings. The Task Force on Library Services to Cultural Minorities, the Task Force on Community Information and Referral Services (CI&R), and the Task Force on the Role of the Special Library in Nationwide Networks and Cooperative Programs completed their work and presented a total of 68 recommendations to the commission. NCLIS will now work with appropriate associations and agencies to implement the recommendations. The Cultural Minorities and CI&R task force reports were published during the year; next year NCLIS and the Special Libraries Association will publish *The Role of the Special Library in Networks and Cooperatives*. These task force reports represent a culmination of several years of study and analysis by a total of 39 experts from the library and information field.

## Cooperative Activities

As part of its continuing responsibility to serve as resident expert to the Congress on policy issues in the library and information field, NCLIS has been instrumental in assisting the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education in evaluating the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). During 1983, NCLIS continued to assist in the development of specifications for the reauthorization of LSCA to strengthen the legislation administratively and substantively. The commission also helped identify witnesses for hearings the subcommittee held in April. NCLIS has been asked to assist with the Senate's review of this legislation in FY 1984.

The commission has also been asked to assist the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education with reauthorization and amendments for the Higher Education Act (HEA) titles having an impact on libraries. Hearings are planned for 1984 and comments on HEA are being solicited.

Following President Reagan's recommendation to transfer the nation's weather and land-sensing satellites to private ownership, NCLIS was asked to advise the Department of Commerce on the archiving of data from these satellites. Under an interagency agreement, NCLIS assembled a distinguished blue ribbon panel composed of scientists, archivists, historians, and other experts from the public and private sector who are knowledgeable about the issues surrounding the preservation and use of these types of data. The panel's objective is to provide guidance on the information policy issues related to archiving the satellite-produced data. The panel will consider the interests of the public, including the scientific, historical, and archival communities, and the needs of other users of satellite data in both the public and private sectors. At the

panel's first meeting, on September 12, the group formulated tentative suggestions for Landsat and Metsat data. At its second and final meeting, on November 28, the panel agreed to a set of findings and recommendations. The commission will present its report to the Commerce Department early in 1984.

The commission assisted the Executive Office of the President with the White House Conference on Productivity held in Washington, D.C., September 22-23. NCLIS involved the library and information community in this effort in several ways. The commission prepared a briefing paper on the information component of productivity for distribution to all participants in the preconferences and main conference; it provided the names of experts and helped form panels for the preconferences; and it provided materials for distribution to make the participants aware of library and information concerns in relation to productivity. NCLIS commissioners and staff also participated in the national conference.

NCLIS continued to work with agencies in the executive branch to encourage and monitor the implementation of the 64 resolutions of the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCOLIS). As in the past, the NCLIS chairperson corresponded with the heads of agencies to learn of progress in the implementation of WHCOLIS resolutions pertaining to each agency.

There were numerous opportunities during 1983 for the commission to promote more effective communication among the members of the library and information community. For example, NCLIS continued to convene monthly meetings of the Public Affairs Roundtable and to compile semiannual statistical updates for staff of the National Center for Education Statistics and representatives from key library and information associations. The commission continued its membership on the Organizing Committee of the Coalition for Literacy, and it continued to assist Barbara (Mrs. George) Bush with her visits to libraries across the country, where she speaks on behalf of literacy and reading.

### **Technology and Productivity**

Under a pioneering public sector/private sector partnership, NCLIS was assisted in a new project by outstanding young librarians from the IBM Corporation's Thomas J. Watson Research Center. The project's objectives are to examine the anticipated information environment of the coming years, assess the impact of technology on various segments of the population, and discover how the new information technologies can be used to promote a more productive society. The first report, available to the public early in 1984, discusses microcomputers, videodiscs, teletext, videotex, cable TV, satellite transmissions, and online data bases as the technologies expected to have the greatest impact on society in the future. The second report will examine the impact of the new technologies on knowledge workers, those whose work produces information rather than a specific product or service. Information is being gathered on ways in which the new technologies can make us more productive as a nation.

### **Improving Library Services**

NCLIS continued to cooperate closely with the National Agricultural Library and other groups within the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the National Rural Information Services Development Program. On August 4, Chairman Hashim pre-

sented a certificate of achievement and appreciation from the commission to Jason Hardman of Elsinore, Utah (pop. 680), for calling national attention to library service needs of people in rural areas. The ceremony was held in the Oval Office of the White House, where Hardman presented President Reagan with a sign bearing the national library symbol. Last year Hardman testified at the joint congressional hearing called "The Information Needs of Rural America—the Roles of Libraries and Information Technology," which was coordinated by the commission. NCLIS has prepared the record of this hearing for publication in 1984 in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture. At the 1983 annual meeting of the American Society for Information Science, NCLIS and USDA cosponsored a session entitled "Information, Innovation, and Productivity in Rural America." The commission has held preliminary discussions with USDA regarding the establishment of an advisory board on rural information needs.

As directed by its enabling legislation, NCLIS is investigating the current state of library and information services to an aging population. Literature searches and analyses have been conducted for reports of needs assessments pertaining to the elderly. NCLIS will work with the Administration on Aging to obtain information from older persons who are potential users of library and information services. A preliminary report on the library and information needs of senior citizens will be released in 1984.

### **International Activities**

In January 1983, the NCLIS executive director served as the U.S. representative to the meeting of the Intergovernmental Council for the UNESCO General Information Program (UNESCO/PGI). In June, the commission assumed responsibility for the U.S. National Committee (USNC) for UNESCO/PGI. Official records were consolidated at NCLIS headquarters; new delegates and alternates to USNC were appointed by the member organizations; and an election of officers, bureau members, and at-large members was conducted. The first plenary meeting of USNC under the NCLIS secretariat took place on June 2. The USNC Bureau met September 22 to prepare the committee's response to the UNESCO draft program and budget for 1984–1985. The USNC has also been asked to advise the State Department in its new overall evaluation of U.S. participation in UNESCO.

During 1983 the commission played a leadership role in a new effort to coordinate participation of the U.S. library and information community in international organizations and programs. NCLIS is serving on the steering committee of an ad hoc international information group originally convened under the auspices of the Council on Library Resources. To further this effort, NCLIS staff put together a summary of U.S. focal points for the principal international library and information organizations. The commission continued to expand its coverage and understanding of international information issues that have implications for the library and information community. At its 1983 meetings the commission received briefings from several experts in the area of reciprocity and transborder data flow.

### **New Programs**

At its October meeting, the commission appointed an ad hoc subcommittee, chaired by Commissioner Gordon Ambach, to study the report *A Nation at Risk*, which was

prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, and to present its findings and recommendations for NCLIS at the January 1984 meeting. In addition, NCLIS will continue to work closely with the Department of Education in examining how libraries contribute to excellence in education and lifelong learning and in emphasizing the importance of the "Fourth R"—the ability to find and use information through library and information services.

During the coming year the commission will build on and expand the major program areas for 1983. For example, in the program area of technology and productivity, NCLIS will examine barriers to use of the new information technologies and ways to expand access to information. In anticipation of launching a major new initiative in FY 1985, NCLIS will prepare an issue paper on the impact of fees on access to information. Other new program thrusts for the coming fiscal years will deal with national information policy and library and information science education.